(c) To tackle the problem of flood/erosion and drainage congestion, Government of Assam has constructed 4454km. long embankments, 850 km. long drainage channels and 660 nos. of town/village protection work so far as short term measures. Government of India has approved Pagladiya Dam Project for Rs. 542.90 crore to be fully funded under the Central Sector. The project besides irrigation of 54,160 ha. of cultivable land will also provide protection against flood to an area of 40,000 ha. with an incidental power benefit of 3 MW (Installed Capacity).

The Government of India has been extending Central Assistance to the State Government of Assam for flood control schemes since 1974-75 in the form of loan and grants. Up to March 2000 a total amount of Rs. 401.03 crore has been provided. The Planning Commission provided further, additional central assistance of Rs. 10 crore to Assam during 2001-2002. An amount of Rs. 49 crore from 1998-99 till 2001-2002 has also been released under Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources.

Indo-Swiss Defence Ties

* 419. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to provide the details of the discussions that took place between him and his counterpart in Switzerland in terms of Indo-Swiss Defence ties?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): Raksha Mantri visited Switzerland from August 28—31, 2002 to attend and address an International Conference of Federalism and to hold talks with Mr. Samuel Schmid, the Swiss Minister for Defence. The discussions between Raksha Mantri and the Swiss Defence Minister explored areas whereby Indo-Swiss defence ties could be strengthened. Raksha Mantri also gave a detailed exposition to his counterpart of India's stance relating to the Kashmir issue. *Inter-alia,* the bilateral talks also focused on the dimensions of the Strategic and Security policies of other nations. The emerging political and security situations in areas such as Central Asia, Afghanistan, the EU etc. were also discussed.

Appointment of Retired IAF Personnel

*420. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that IAF are seriously thinking of reappointing its retired personnel to work on assignments;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any other country is using such a method; and

(d) if so, the details of the countries which are using their retired personnel to serve their Force?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) Indian Air Force is utilizing the services of retired officers of and below the rank of Wing Commander by re-employing them in available vacancies. As regards airmen, a Placement Cell is in position to assist retired airmen in obtaining employment with Public Sector Undertakings.

Details relating to methods used by other countries are not available with us.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Phasing out manual jobs in underground mines

2824. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of COAL & MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Coal India Limited plans to phase out manual jobs in underground mining to rise productivity through mechanisation;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether underground coal mining through manual systems have been proved to be risky and expensive; and

(d) if so, by when underground coal mining through manual system is likely to be abolished?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL AND MINES (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) Coal India is introducing mechanisation in phased manner replacing the manual system to increase production and productivity in their underground mines. Manual coal loading in many mines have been mechanized with deployment of side discharge loaders and load haul dumpers. Mechanized powered